

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT CALDERA ON FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

1. DURING REGULAR WEEK PRESS CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 21, PRESIDENT CALDERA SAID FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING NEEDS TO ESTABLISH MECHANISM BY WHICH A UNITED LATIN AMERICA CAN PRESENT ITS ASPIRATIONS BEFORE US

HE SAID WHAT MUST BE AVOIDED IS "THE HABITUAL POLICY OF A GREAT POWER LIKE THE UNITED STATES FACING A GROUP OF SMALLER COUNTRIES LIKE THOSE OF LATIN AMERICA: TO ORGANIZE A BIG SHOW, A BIG PUBLICITY APPARATUS SO AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSONALITY, A PRESIDENT, SECRETARY OF STATE, GIVES SOME PLEASANT SPEECHES, ANNOUNCES A TOTAL POLICY REVISION, MAKES SOME PROMISES WHICH ARE PRETTY BUT GENERALLY VAGUE, AND AFTERWARDS EVERYTHING CONTINUES AS BEFORE."

2. CALDERA ALSO SAID THAT IF LA COUNTRIES DO NOT FACE US UNITED, "WE WILL WASTE OUR TIME; SOME FOREIGN MINISTERS WILL HAVE THE PLEASURE OF HAVING THEIR PICTURE TAKEN WITH DR. KISSINGER SO THEIR CHILDREN CAN KEEP THE PHOTO FOR HISTORY, OTHERS WILL SAY SOME WORDS WHICH THEIR COUNTRIES' NEWSPAPERS CAN HAIL AS AN ELOQUENT SPEECH,

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BUT THINGS WILL CONTINUE IN THE SAD STATE THEY ARE IN TRADITIONALLY."

3. CALDERA SAID BILATERAL US/VENEZUELAN RELATIONS IN PAST FIVE YEARS HAVE BEEN GOOD AND CORDIAL, WITH MANY INSTANCES OF COLLABORATION WHICH VENEZUELA APPRECIATES. WHILE NOTING VENEZUELA HAS MADE ITS OWN DECISIONS, CALDERA SAID THAT UNDERSTANDING BY "AMERICAN DIPLOMATS" THAT HIS POLICY OF PLURALISTS SOLIDARITY MEANS AN ANTI-AMERICAN POSITION IS NOT CORRECT, AND THAT IT IS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST ANYONE. HE SAID US SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE "NOBLE AND LOYAL" ATTITUDE OF VENEZUELA, WHICH MAINTAINS ITS TRADITION OF A GOOD PETROLEUM SUPPLIER, AND "NOT FOR A MOMENT THINKS OF CONTRIBUTING TO THIS CRISIS BY DIMINISHING ITS PETROLEUM SOLD". CALDERA SAID HE IS GRIEVED THAT FLORIDA, A STATE WITH WHICH VENEZUELA HAS SPECIAL TIES OF SYMPATHY, HAS BEEN SOURCE OF STRONGEST WORDS AGAINST THIS COUNTRY. BUT HE NOTED TIME IS PAST WHEN SUCH THREATS HAVE ANY EFFECT AND SAID, "WE SHALL MAINTAIN OUR DECORUM AND DEFEND WHAT IS OURS, AND WITHOUT INJURING OR OFFENDING ANYONE WE SHALL STAND TALL TO AFFIRM OUR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY."

4. COMMENT: GIVEN LOCAL IRRITATION AT WHAT ARE TAKEN HERE TO BE THREATS OF REPRISALS BY US CONGRESS PLUS TONE OF CALVANI'S TOUGH COMMENTS REPORTED FROM MEXICO, CALDERA'S STATEMENTS WERE QUITE MODERATE.

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